



**Transit Committee
Minutes - Draft**

**Regular Meeting
Tuesday, June 7, 2016**

Attending:

Committee Members: Adam Charnack, Chair; Valarie Macklin; Anthony Mitchell; Gary Ray; Lauren Noto; Bruce Emory; Calvin Allen; Charlton Owens; Edward Johnson; Tom Tomlin; Kim

City/ART Staff: Mariate Echeverry ; Kelly Whitlock

Community Members: Robert Babbitt, Christy Price, Sabrah n'ha Raven, Cindy Oak, Tina Sovall, Jim Palhomw, Vicki Meath, Dave Nutton, Cindy Holson

3:36 PM – Opening of meeting

Adam called the meeting to order.

Review agenda – Reynolds and RFP bullet points switched. Gary motioned, Charlton seconded. Unanimous in favor.

Approval of 3 May 2016 Minutes – Gary motioned, Kim seconded. Unanimous in favor.

3:43 PM – Public Comment

Christy with Helpmate- Chairing “eNOugh” campaign to help spread awareness of sexual violence in the community. Hoping to display posters on the bus from August to October. Want to spread awareness about the Family Justice Center’s opening. Many services will be provided under one roof, like Pisgah Legal and the police. Adam: there might be a nonprofit rate to advertise in the buses. Mariate: no outside advertisement. Inside approved according to policy.

3:45 PM - TC Experiences Riding the Bus

Kim: May 7 12:50 – w3 and w4 never came even though NextBUS said they would come.

Lauren: Similar experience on June 2nd with N route.

3:49 PM Unfinished Business

Will talk about retreat later. Lauren will send out Doodle this week.

3:50 PM New Business

Reynolds Campus Conversation- provided white paper, have already presented to other groups like city council. Family-to-Family organization in Reynolds district helps neighboring schools meet unmet needs of impoverished youth. Lack of public transportation for Reynolds Middle and Reynolds High is a huge barrier for poor families. Closest bus stop is 1.9 miles away. Many students cannot participate in extracurricular activities because of a lack of transportation. More information regarding the survey can be found at tinyurl.com/acrneedsabus. Many students live in the City of Asheville and cannot utilize public transportation, even though they already use the bus system to go to places such as the mall and downtown. Survey results show that 73.5% of students would use the bus if it were available. They recommend a timeframe from about 10 to 6 or 7 PM for the students. A potential stop would be the loop

that starts at Rocket Drive off HWY 74. Gary: what would it cost to implement this? Mariate: \$350,000 for full route. Services to Weaverville and up to Black Mountain are paid by NCDOT partnership. Reynolds service might take a similar approach. Tom: are there set rules for county service if they are not done through partnership. Kim: what is the action we are going to take? Adam: Advocacy. Adam will send information out via email to the committee with contacts for this project.

Management Company RFP – First Transit Representative Not Present, McDonald Transit Representative Present

Currently the city funds but outsources the management and the operations of the transit system to First Transit. We have put out a request for proposals to determine who will be the next operator.

Mariate: in the final stages of the management company RFP. Went to Multi Modal Transportation Committee for endorsement and now Transit Committee needs to endorse

Two proposals by **McDonald Transit** and **First Transit**. MMTC recommended First Transit. Valarie asked why. Mariate responded that the evaluation committee ranked First Transit higher. Evaluation committee made up of two MMTC members, one TC member, one transit planner from the City of Raleigh. Looked at the RFP, went through proposals, and then responded to the evaluation criteria. Lauren: how is ranking determined?

Mariate: numerical scale for each of the criteria, to make it objective; ranking from 1-10. Valarie: what are some substantive changes to the contract? Mariate: creation of a resident management team instead of just one general manager, additional vehicles belonging to First Transit instead of city vehicles because the city is moving away from contractors using vehicles, incorporation of liquidated damages: penalization for poor performance. General items such as passenger complaints, maintenance items, on time performance. Currently on extension with first transit until June 30, 2016.

Vicki Meath, Just Economics: 19th point on 19 Point Agenda is that the management company acts in the best interest of the city and riders. Tried to look at who were the decision makers for certain pieces when they first started the campaign. The Management Company is not a public entity and therefore they cannot get direct public records, so they come to city staff, council, and the transit committee. Came with significant concerns about First Transit that are still concerning. Any time that they brought up patterns of mismanagement that have resulted in high turnover rate and serious situations, they were told that it was a resource problem or between the union and First Transit. A multitude of issues and an untenable situation with the drivers give pause for concern. Consistent excuses noted by Just Economics. Vicki asks why we pick based on a low bid and then First Transit says that it doesn't have enough resources. Mariate clarified: resources versus money in the contract for operations are two different pools. Valarie: where is the concern: the depth of the resources or that you don't have transparency on information? Vicki: what we hear from the city any time that we bring up any of the issues is that First Transit doesn't have the resources and that it's not their fault. If you bring up personnel issues, it gets re routed to not being able to get involved with the union contract.

Kim: spent the last two weeks digging through the complaints. Embarrassing complaints from sexual harassment to driving without a CDL for 6 months. Is also aware of a letter of no confidence that has 33/56 driver and mechanic signatures on it. There is a concern for retaliation. Heard at the Multi Modal meeting that it needs to go to City Council because we had a deadline, but concerned about the ill informed decision because it didn't come to the Transit Committee first who is more informed.

Lauren: seconds the issue, notes that Wilmington had similar issues with their union having serious problems with First Transit and we are ignoring them.

Anthony: wanted to know where Kim got the information, Kim said she was not at liberty to say where she got the letters.

Tom: Wanted to mention that he was on the committee to review the bids and Mariate advised us. Cannot mention specifics.

Valarie: Concerned because there is a deadline and there are serious problems with First Transit. Not necessarily convinced that McDonald can come in and save the day. Is there even a system in place before we get to liquidated damages stage to hold First Transit accountable? Seems to be where the concern is. If we get another company in, will there be a way to hold them accountable?

Mariate: there were things that Just Economics suggested that were incorporated into the RFP besides liquidated damages.

Robert Babbitt, President of McDonald Transit: Have great respect for process that went on. There are concerns, but this is not the right forum. In four other markets with the same competitor, they have improved the bus system with the same number of resources. Are the only company in the world that pursues management contracts like this, this hard. Only follow proscribed processes. Were selected 8 years ago but committee recommendation was not upheld.

No motion was made to endorse first Transit. A motion was made to endorse McDonald by Kim. Gary seconded. Pro motion made by Kim and Lauren. Neither motion made by Adam and Anthony because they feel that they do not have enough information. Anthony would consider going pro to have the ability to revisit Kim's letters and corroborate. Has concerns about accountability for all parties involved. Valarie is also on the fence, with concerns about accountability. Charlton wants to know more about McDonald before we make more determination. Anthony asked what type of information. Charlton asked for accountability information and documentation about McDonald transit system. Gary asked when a decision will be made. Adam said June 14 at the City Council meeting. Anthony asked about whether the bids were satisfactory and will fit budget needs, even though we know First Transit's bid is less. Valarie asked who actually holds the management company accountable when the contract is breached or behavior is wrong. Mariate answered that it was the city. Valarie asked if there a specific process for the city to discipline. Kim's issue is that the management is lacking based on all the accounts of dirty staff bathrooms and yelling at management. Kelly Whitlock: there would be certain terms and conditions for any company. If they weren't meeting these terms and conditions, there would be different steps. Valarie asked for education from Kelly for how the accountability system works for the city. Kelly does not know that if this is the role of legal or more appropriate for Mariate. If a department has concerns about the contract, they bring them to legal. Depending on the terms and what the issue is, there is either a letter written notifying or other action. The City of Asheville has not ever determined that First Transit is in violation of contract.

Sabrah n'ha Raven: Want to clarify that the phrase "the city has not determined that First Transit is in violation of contract" doesn't actually mean that they have officially determined that. This is an important distinction to make.

Kim motioned that we move to endorse McDonald transit. 6-0 opposed, 3 abstain. Motion passes in favor of endorsing McDonald transit.

Asheville in Motion – Plan came out, recommends city-wide improvements, transit some of those. The City is working on getting ancillary money from other sources to accelerate some of those projects. MMTC should take a look at these and find priorities. Adam asks that we raise the topic to get MMTC to endorse some low cost easy to implement AIM priorities. A task force composed of one member from bike, greenway, transit, and MMTC. Adam put forth the motion that the Transit Committee would like to offer a task force to help prioritize and guide the implementation of AIM projects where the Transit Committee. Gary made the motion since the chair cannot officially put forward a motion.

5:22 PM Transit Committee Business

Kim – MMTC Update: staff requested that MMTC endorse First Transit for 3 year contract. News regarding the

****Get this from Kim****

Driver's Meeting Update - Tom: Mentioned PVA again having to go around. No changes to W3 and W4 even though there is construction. Floated ideas to change this route. Talked about late buses like W4 and bunching of buses. Some question about NextBus providing inaccurate times.

Mariate: working on handling PVA by not skipping an area and perhaps sending another bus, because every time you skip an area you leave people stranded. There will be no increase in fares on July 1. Calvin asked to clarify that there are no fare changes for anything, including passes. Mariate confirmed this. Council did not consider the fare change.

Charlton left the meeting early at 5:23

PM Staff Updates

List of Projects – Mariate:

- 1) New temporary staff member – has been working for 3 weeks: Elias Mathes, Grants Coordinator.
- 2) Received notification last week that Warren Wilson wanted to cancel service due to budgetary constraints. Staff is working on understanding what type of service they can continue to fund in Black Mountain without this money.

Monthly Operating Statistics – Rose Christian not present. Email questions to her.

5:30 Public Comment

Cindy Holson : Appreciates resource challenges. Here to be a member of the public supporting Reynolds Bus Schedule. Why should Asheville put resources towards that? A large portion of Reynolds students are in the city. These are lower income areas and densely populated. This dense population is more worthwhile to serve because they need the services. Census data may oppose reality because it is outdated. She has family members who are disabled in areas where the bus does not serve them. This is a real challenge for these families to do anything.

5:35 Future Agenda Items

- **Retreat** – Find moderator free times and then go from there. Mid August to Early September. Then Lauren will send out a poll.
- **Try Different Meeting Times** – Adam sent out a poll to get different meeting times. We have a hard time getting data from month end because of how early the meeting is. Third Tuesday of the month seemed to be a good date. Meeting times later or earlier to accommodate more people. Motion to move the meeting from 5 July to 19 July at 4 PM as a trial period. Motion passes.

Next Meeting: July 19, 2016 – 4-5:30 PM – 1st Floor Conference Room